[1966?]

For: ART NEWS

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY ACQUISITION:

India, Mysore, late 12th century A.D.

64.369 A GUARDIAN OF SHIVA
Architectural stele of dark stone, H. 44-5/8" x W. 19-3/8"

John L. Severance Fund from William H. Wolff, 843 A Madison Ave. NY

The GUARDIAN OF SHIVA is an architectural stele of dark stone from the region of Mysore, Hoysala, about late 12th century A.D. Hoysala sculptures, extremely rare outside India, are marked by a tremendous development of detail cut into the hard and brittle stone. Often they are merely detailed. This particular piece has strong sculptural qualities, in addition to the ornaments, and even more has the power (indicated by the figure's tusks and bulging eyes) to inspire a degree of awe and terror befitting a guardian of Shiva in his tamasic (terrible, fierce or angry) aspect.

At the top of the stele is a glory mask. The figure itself stands at ease and on either lower corner of it are small figures of women with chauris in their hands. Two of the figure's four arms are broken off at the elbows; the lost right hand appears to have held a huge mace which rests, what remains of it, at the figure's foot. The complete, lifted right hand holds a drum elaborately ornamented with tassels and bow-knots and the complete, lifted left hand holds a trident encircled by a cobra and adorned with a human skull.

The guardian is exuberantly adorned with towering crown, earrings, bracelets, rings on thumbs, fingers and toes, armbands, huge anklets and padasaras lying

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across the foot; all are intricately wrought to the minutest detail. About the figure's neck is a torque, a round necklace and a long pendant necklace. Around the upper waist is a udara-bandha or waist band from which hangs a huge garland of two strands made up of human heads and rosettes. Around the hips is a katibahdna or girdle with tassels and festoons and loops of jewels called an uru-dama.